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SKETCH OF THE EARLIER LIFE OF THE EARL OF SELKIRK.

Paper read before the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, February 8th, 1881, by Rev. Prof. Bryce, M.A., LL.B.,
Delegue de l'Institution Ethnographique, Paris, Corresponding Secretary of the Society. William Cowan, M.D., the President of
the Society, occupied the chair.

We are engaged in unravelling a tangled web. The events which transpired between the years 1811-1820 in connection with the Selkirk colony, with the disputes of the rival companies—the company of adventurers to Hudson's Bay, having their headquarters in London, and the North-West Company of Canada, centering in Montreal—are a series of complicated issues. The historic materials of the time are evidently given on both sides as the product of such violent partisanship that the most thorough research and calmest judgment are necessary to gain the truth. It is to the interest of no one now to keep back the facts. Sixty years may well suffice to let the fires of party spirit die away. What motives Lord Selkirk had in founding the colony on the banks of Red River have been much discussed. The Nor-Westerners did not hesitate to accuse him of the grossest cupidity, and their spokesman wrote warning all against "land jobbery speculators, a class of persons well known in America, and of whom Lord Selkirk, from the magnitude of his operations, may be styled the chief." Sheriff Ross, a writer in thorough sympathy with Lord Selkirk, in his work on Red River, after suggesting various possible motives, ends by concluding that the christianization of the Indians was his aim, though he was not sure how the noble Earl hoped to accomplish this. A late writer has said: "His Lordship's real object in forming the colony on the Red River appeared at the time to be the hope of getting a number of hardy men raised in the country inured to the climate, and devoted to their patron's interest, to enter into the Hudson Bay Company's employ and become servile tools in carrying arbitrary measures for the destruction of the North-West Company." The historian of Minnesota states Lord Selkirk's purpose to have been to effect the "colonizing of British emigrants in these distant British possessions and thus check the disposition to settle in the United States". Sad, indeed, would it have been had any British peer been so unworthy of his class as to make the series of hundreds of the starving peasantry of his native country a means of gain; most unlikely is it that he would take families containing women and children to share the rigors of a northern climate to rear a native race of Hudson's Bay trappers, when hundreds of Orcadians and North Country men could be got for low wages and shipped by whole vessel loads to trap and hunt; not the sending out of but a single Highland catechist (Sutherland) with his colonists would have been his method had Indian civilization been his object. Had Lord Selkirk only desired to check the tendency towards American emigration, with less expense and toil, he could have colonized the fertile lands of Upper Canada then open to settlement. Why will men not take the simplest explanation when it amply meets the case? Lord Selkirk organized a colony for the good of the colonists, placed it where it would be unaffected by contact with what he considered hurtful influences, and spent time and thought, and money—even his own life being worn out in the struggle—to advance the interests of his people. Why will men attribute sordid, impure, interested motives when pure patriotism or noble philanthropy are simple explanations lying ready to hand? That all actions are selfish is the dogma of certain philosophers, not the belief of a true lover of his kind. The names of Baltimore and Penn stand worthy of remembrance—and that of Selkirk, if we rightly read his life, may well make up an honorable trio.

To get the clue to a man's life it must be taken as a whole. It is only by considering the various points of a character under varying circumstances and at different times that we surely interpret what the man is. Acting on this principle I have sought to obtain the leading features of Lord Selkirk's life before he had any connection with Nor-western colonization. It is for others to judge whether there be throw any light upon the man, or if his motives and actions which have been so variously interpreted.

Public sentiment has recognized Lord Selkirk as worthy of honor. The name of Selkirk has been indelibly fixed in the North-West. The

with the sword, and the lands of Douglas were granted to him because he had won them honorably. The same spirit and daring, we shall see, survived in his descendant. The men of five or six centuries ago had need of persistency and grip. The surnames given them in those days of banberk and steel tell well enough the kind of work men did, for Theobald's great-grandson was Sir William Douglas the Hardy, and Sir William's grandson was Archibald the Grim. Sir William had the hardihood to join the unlucky Wallace, and for so doing the English conqueror harried his lands, seized his cattle, and carried off his wife and helpless bairns. The following pages will show whether the persecuted but persevering Earl of Selkirk was not a worthy scion of his race.

Did Lord Selkirk in his times of greatest difficulty need the inspiration to be got from an ancestral succession of noble deeds, there was no lack of these. It was one of that great house of Douglas, James, the second Earl of Douglas, who, following in the footsteps of his race, in keeping alive the fiery feuds of the Border, gained the name given him by Fordun, "the pluckiest of soldiers, and to the English ever the most obnoxious." Penetrating to the gates of York, he brought the fierce wrath of Hotspur upon him at Otterburne; and though signally defeating the English, he fell in the hardest of the fighting mortally wounded, and thanking God that "few of his ancestors had died in chambers."

To this same family also belonged "the good Sir James." It was his good fortune to have lived in the auspicious days of Bruce, who reckoned him the mainstay of the kingdom and his friend. In Scott's "Lord of the Isles," said this great warrior:

"Dead were my heart, and deaf mine ear,
If Bruce should call nor Douglas hear."

Sir James was foremost at Bannockburn; he headed twenty thousand of an army on a sally into England; with two hundred horsemen he freed his way through the English camp to the royal tent at Stanhope Park, and well nigh secured the person of King Edward. It was this Douglas, also, to whom King Robert, in dying, gave the solemn charge that his heart should be borne to Jerusalem, and laid within the holy sepulchre. By so brave and devoted a friend the charge could not be disregarded. The journey was undertaken in person. Spain was reached, but in a conflict with the Moors his life was lost. It happened thus: Seeing the Saracens, to whom he was opposed, flinching, and likely to break in confusion, he threw the ensign before him and into the midst of the enemy, exclaiming: "Pass thou onward as thou wert wont, Douglas will follow thee or die." The chances of war were adverse; the warrior never reached the Holy City, and the mutilated body and his master's heart were carried back to Scotland again. And if these examples were not enough, there stands the figure of the Earl of Selkirk's ancestor ten generations back—Archibald, well known as "Bell the Cat."

I mean that Douglas-fifth of yore,
Who coronet of Angus bore,
And when his blood and heart were high,
D.d the third James n' camp defy,
And all his minions led to die
On Lauder's dreary flat.

It was he who was courageous enough to warn the infatuated James the Fourth against trying the odds of war on the disastrous field of Flodden. The sturdy old man, stung to the quick by the undeserved reply of the King, "Angus, if you are afraid, you may go home," left the field, with whom he was dearly attached, to perish in upholding the abused theory that "the King can do no wrong."

With such heroic blood in his veins, the fifth Earl of Selkirk was born—being the seventh son of Dunbar, fourth Earl of Selkirk, who had resumed the name of Douglas. Thomas Douglas early showed the ability and industry of his race. About the age of eighteen he is found pursuing an academic career in Edinburgh, and there is known as one of a band of illustrious young men earnestly engaged in literary and learned pur-

Scotland was at this time in a critical state. The country was emerging from a state of backwardness almost of barbarism, and entering on some phases of improvement and advanced civilization. In such transitions much individual suffering ensues. The wheels of progress crush the weak, the imbecile, and the luckless. The Scottish Highlands from being simply wild wastes with here and there collections of cotters' huts, were in many places being subdued and thrown into wide stretches for the better cultivation of pastoral pursuits. These were woe-filled days for the peasantry. Of these events young Douglas, not yet come to his title, was an interested spectator. He saw the Highlander as the embodiment of the picturesque. The Highland chief was the most absolute of rulers. The Highland regiment, with the garb of the mountaineer, with intense devotion to their mother tongue, with their enthusiastic pride for their family history, as "Evan's, Donald's" fame found in each clansman's ears, with their proud, lofty and independent bearing appeals to the young and the romantic. The romantic environment of the Kelt, coupled with the misery caused by the change of life forced upon him appealed irresistibly to the heart of Thomas Douglas. In an article in the *Edinburgh Review*, Oct., 1805, is the following statement:—"Without any local connection with the Highlands he (Douglas) was, ed very early in life to take a warm interest in the fate of his countrymen in that part of the kingdom. During the course of his academical studies his curiosity was strongly excited by the representations he heard of the ancient state of society and the striking peculiarity of manners still remaining among them; and in the year 1792 he undertook an extensive tour through this wild region, and explored many of its remotest and most secluded valleys." The noble youth of twenty-one was filled with patriotic ardor for their relief. How beautiful a thing is the fresh outburst of youthful hope and sympathy ere the sordid bonds of years and affairs swathe and close up the soul! With this tender-hearted Scottish noble the dreams of youth did not fade away as years advanced, for no sooner had he come into his title and estates than he set about preparing plans for the relief of the Highland peasantry. The death of his brother in 1797 brought him the title, Baron Drer and S.ortelough, and on the death of his father, in 1799, he succeeded to the estates and the peerage, as Earl of Selkirk—the title given four generations before, in 1646, to a branch of the house of Angus.

But Napocon was now in his high career. The excitement of the time checked any movement for the benefit of the homeless peasants. The return of peace gave Selkirk the opportunity of pressing on a member of the British Government the crying need of interfering to help the expatriated cottars to find a resting-place in the new world. Lightly yeas ago governments did not look upon themselves bound as now to succor the suffering, and the strongest appeals produced no results. The compassionate nob eman with great energy undertook to settle a colony of these Highlanders in Prince Edward Island upon waste lands given him by the Government. To ensure success, he undertook the personal oversight of this enterprise. The mournful band of pilgrims, to the number of 800, following the dictates of prudence rather than of feeling, broke up their homes, if any option still remained, and though uncertain, were greatly encouraged by his Lordship's interest and care.

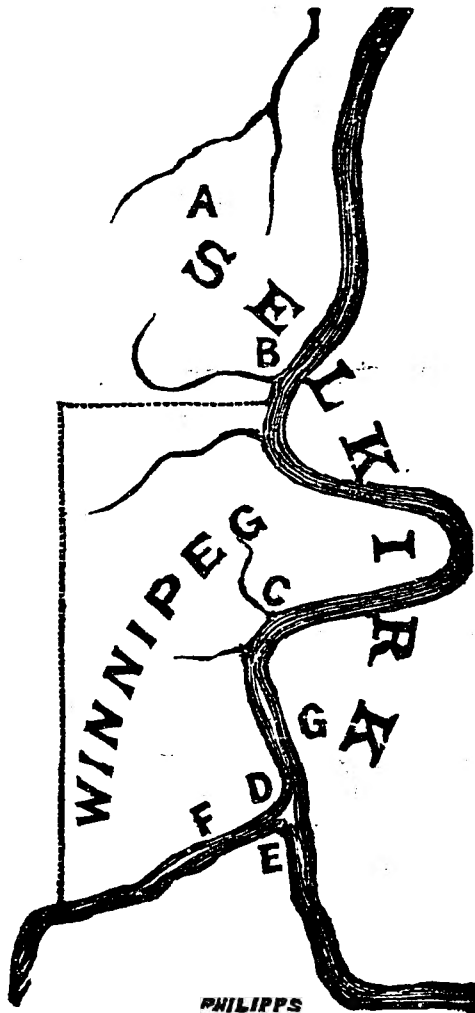
In August, 1803, the colonists reached their future home, and by the middle of September had building houses "in a little knot together." The same month Lord Selkirk came to Montreal. The next year was one of earnest industry with the settlers; they were all encouraged to labor, for the rewards were for themselves. On being visited in that year by their generous patron, they were engaged in securing their harvest, and the land cultivated in that year averaged two acres for every working hand. The settlers had also constructed rude boats, and with these secured a harvest of the finny product of the sea. The experiment, instead of being a failure, as propheta

Royal Society was conferred upon the author. But the ever active mind of the Earl would rise to higher things—and those not being less than founding an Empire in the very heart of North America. After planting his Highland countrymen in Prince Edward Island by the sea in 1803 he had gone to Montreal. He had heard of the fertile lands of Upper Canada, and started a small colony in the County of Kent, at a place called Baldoon, after a part of his family possessions, but this was simply doing what individual settlers could accomplish themselves. He would start, unhampered by old conditions and pre-existing enactments, he would found a colony on the virgin soil to work out a destiny of its own. While sojourning in Montreal in the year 1803 there was much that appealed to his love of the picturesque and the daring. He met the North-Western fur traders, he saw their baronial hauteur and their lordly gatherings, but he heard moreover of the adventures of the voyageur. That after passing many hundred miles by fell and flood—running rocky cascades—and portaging around rapids too fierce to be faced, they arrived at a land where the green grass waved over level glades hundreds of miles, where the rivers thronged with fish, where the buffalo careered, and where bountiful Ceres gave forth her treasures simply for the asking. He contrasted this with rocky glades and sterile lands and contracted holdings, and the imagination of the enthusiast was fired, and the heart of the colonizer satisfied. A great obstacle met him on the threshold—one of the two great monopolies of modern times—the Hudson's Bay Company held the country. For well nigh 140 years this company had carried on its trade with exclusive powers, got originally from easy-going Charles II., who had given away what neither he nor any of his ministers—keen and shrewd as they were—knew aught about. So huge an obstacle would have convinced most men that further progress towards the ideal was impossible.

The organizer of the Prince Edward Island colony of Highlanders, with his increased experience, with ample means, and urged on by the continued cry of misery of his unfortunate countrymen in the Highlands, was equal to the emergency. In company with a prominent Nor-Western in England, he undertook the bold project of obtaining the control of the stock of the Hudson's Bay Company. The unfortunate operations of successive years had reduced the value of Hudson's Bay Company stock from above 200 per cent. to less than 60. The time was favorable for their design. After acquiring a quantity of stock jointly, however, a disagreement arose between the partners. An arrangement was made between the parties by which they dissolved connection, Lord Selkirk retaining one portion, and his partner another part of the stock acquired.

Lord Selkirk had a definite end in view, while his associate merely bought as a commercial investment. After their separation, Selkirk, bent on his work of colonization, increased his stock by purchase to some £40,000 which was almost a moiety of the whole—that being in 1804 reported as £104,000. The Nor-Western authors continually present this course of his Lordship as objectionable, but fail to show in what respect. To buy and pay for stock and its franchises is not supposed to be an immoral act in our day. Especially free was Selkirk from any imputation when he had no part in bringing the company to its almost insolvent state; the new directorate of the company received an offer from Lord Selkirk for the transfer of a large tract of land lying on the Red River and its affluents, being an amount variously estimated from 10,000 to 210,000 square acres, thus containing not less than five times as much territory as the present Province of Manitoba. The accompanying diagram shows the limits of this lordly possession, from which it will be seen that the trapezium obtained includes the whole of our own Province. The area purchased by Lord Selkirk was known as the Territory of Ossiniboia.

his motives and actions which have been so variously interpreted. Public sentiment has recognized Lord Selkirk as worthy of honor. The name of Selkirk has been indelibly fixed in the North-West. The metropolitan county of Manitoba bears his name; the crossing of the Red River by the great Canadian Pacific Railway has been appropriately named after the founder of North-Western civilization. Fort Daer, remembered by the Selkirk refugees in their first wintering, situated in the angle of the Red and Pemmica Rivers, on the south side of the latter, bore one of their patron's titles; while in the city of Winnipeg the site is still pointed out at the base of the peninsula of Point Douglas, of Fort Douglas, commemorative of the family name of the colonist.



D—Fort Gibraltar—the Nor'-Wester Fort.
C—Site of Fort Douglas.
E—Reputed Fort Rouge (Verandrye 1731-8).
F—Present Fort Garry.
A—Spot where Gov. Semple was killed by Nor'-Westers (1816).
G—First chapel built by Roman Catholic missionaries (1818).
B—First Protestant Church in Rupert's Land, built 1823.

A SKETCH OF LORD SELKIRK.

Thomas Douglas—fifth Earl of Selkirk—Baron Daer and Shorteleugh, Fellow of the Royal Society—was born in June, 1771, and lived an eventful life of forty-nine years. The family seat of St. Mary's Isle, in Kirkcubrightshire, Scotland, at the mouth of the Dee, on a peninsula formerly isolated by the sea at every side, and looking out upon the Solway Frith—knew him but little in his adventurous career. He was an author, a patriot, a colonizer, and a philanthropist. Of a perverted race, he was distinguished for enthusiastic devotion to his projects. The intrepidity of the Douglasses, the perseverance of the ancient family of Marr, and the venturesomeness of the house of Angus, were all his inheritance by blood descent. Nineteen generations back, and not less than seven hundred years before his time, Theobald, the Fleming—the Selkirk ancestor—had scorned the quieter pleasures of home, and gone to seek his fortunes among the Saxon peoples of old Northumbria, had bought himself a new home

early showed the ability and industry of his race. About the age of eighteen he is found pursuing an academic career in Edinburgh, and there is known as one of a band of illustrious young men earnestly engaged in literary and learned pursuits. "The Club," numbering some nineteen in all, included among its members the young Walter Scott, about the same age as Selkirk, as well as others who afterwards rose to prominence and fame. It is further interesting to note the influences surrounding the early years of the young noble in the connection of the House of Selkirk with the poet Burns at this period. The father of Thomas Douglas was among those who did honor to the peasant bard, and patronized the spoiled though limited poet by letting him to remain at his seat at St. Mary's Isle. The poet teins asked to say grace on one occasion, extemporized the lines found in his works and well known as the

SELKIRK GRACE.

"Some hae meat and canna eat,
An, some wad eat that want it;
But we hae meat, an' we can eat,
An' sae the Lord be thankit."

One of Burns' amusing poems, in which the intensely realistic mind of the poet shows itself in an interview between Lord Daer, the brother of the young Douglas, and Burns, may be referred to. Dugald Stewart, the well known Edinburgh professor of moral philosophy, was spending his summer near Ayr, in the year 1786. Among the other guests of the professor was Lord Daer. A live Lord from such an ancient house as that of Douglas filled the ploughman-poet's mind with fear. But the genial and generous interest found in this representative, as in all of the Selkirk family, disarmed the prejudice of the poet, and drew forth encomiums even from so hard a critic.

This wot ye all whom it concerns
I, Rhymer Robin, alias Burns,
October twenty-third,
A ne'er to be forgotten day,
Sae far I sprached up the brae,
I dinner'd wi' a Lord.

Yes, wi' a Lord—scand out my shin—
A Lord—a Peer—an Earl's son—
Up higher yet my bonnet,
And sic a Lord—lang Scotch ells twa,
Our Peerage he o'erlocks them a'
As I look o'er my sonnet.

I sidling shelter'd in a nook,
An' at His Lordship steal'd a look
Like some portentous omen;
Except good sense and social glee
An' (what surprised me) modesty,
I mark'd nought uncommon.

I watched the symptoms of the great,
The gentle pride, the lordly state,
The arrogant assuming;
The fient a bride, nae pride had he,
Nor saucy nor state that I could see,
Mair than an honest ploughman.

Then from His Lordship I shall learn
Henceforth to meet with unconcern
One rank as weel's another;
Nae honest, worthy man need care
To meet with noble, youthful Daer,
For he but meets a brother.

Among those who belonged to the Club of Carrubers Place were some afterwards so well known, as William Clark of Eldin, Sir A. Ferguson, Lord Abercrombie and David Douglas, afterwards Lord Reston.

For the young nobleman it means much to be associated with kindred spirits such as these—of healthy mind and generous culture. Adverse circumstances, and the desire for distinction gives stimulus sufficient to the poor and friendless scholar, but it needs some of the attrition of the mind, gained from such surroundings, to give the young man of family and position motive for energetic effort. The young literateurs met together in a room in Carrubers Close, Edinburgh, off the High Street, and from this resort they often adjourned to an oyster tavern in the same neighborhood. It speaks well for the morals of these young men to find one of them—no less than Walter Scott himself—delaring about this time "depend upon it of all vices drinking is the most incompatible with greatness." Of the warmth and cordiality of this association we get a glimpse in the fact that when any member of the club received a promotion or appointment it was a rule that he should give a dinner to his associates.

Oh, for the sunny days of youth again! Youth fires youth to generous impulse, and it would have been strange indeed if hopes and plans and bright ideas for the regeneration of the world and society had not found place among the discussions of the club.

were engaged in securing their harvest, and the land cultivated in that year averaged two acres for every working hand. The settlers had also constructed rude boats, and with these secured a harvest of the finny product of the sea. The experiment, instead of being a failure, as prophets of evil had predicted, had succeeded to the highest extent. Five thousand people in Queen's County, Prince Edward Island—the descendants of that band of 800 pilgrim fathers—are to-day among the most prosperous of the inhabitants of the island.

In 1805 Lord Selkirk determined to bring the matter of a more extensive emigration before the British Government and nation. This he did in a volume of over two hundred pages, in which he discussed the deplorable state of the Highlands, spoke strongly of the need of promoting emigration; and to show that his projects were feasible, gave an account of the Highland colony taken by him to Prince Edward Island. So well was this literary enterprise accomplished that afterwards even one of the Earl's most bitter opponents in his North-Western colonization scheme says:—"I was delighted to find a Scotch peer writing with so much intelligence and felicity of style." The book drew forth most favorable notices, and the leading critic of the time, Lord Jeffrey, says:—"The candour with which the first obstacles are described, the practical and profound judgment with which the various measures and arrangements appear to have been combined, and that tone of benevolence without ostentation and yet thoroughly systematic, which pervades the whole design, renders it the most pleasing and useful history that has been given to the world of the establishment of a new colony."

But the public spirit and generous sympathy of Selkirk may be further seen in the warm interest taken by him in the welfare of Britain, in the perilous times through which she was passing. Men's aims, sympathies, and bent of mind may be well gauged by the part they play in times of national exigence.

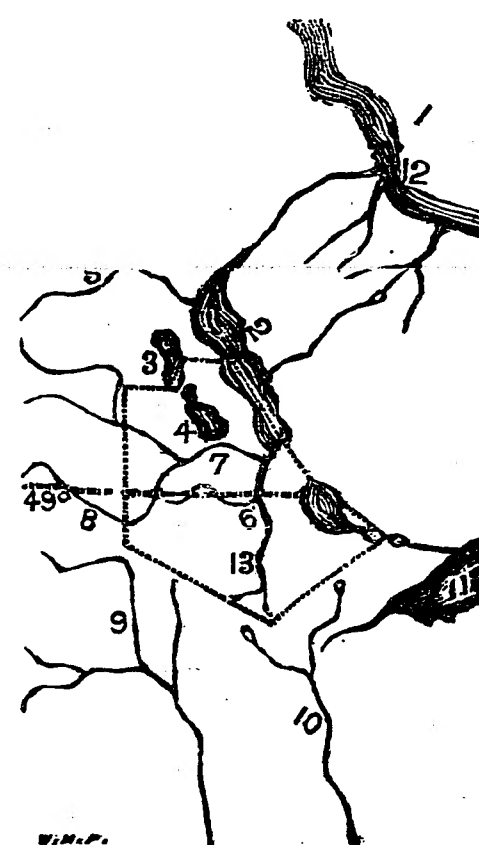
Those who live for selfish objects—for mere money getting or pleasure seeking, or even chiefly for literary pursuits—care little what befalls the State; intelligent patriotism is an almost unfailing evidence of a large heart. The early part of the nineteenth century was a time of deepest anxiety to the British patriot; Napoleon with "Europe-shadowing wings" was at his height; 1807 brought his climax of greatness. In August of that year he had created his brother, Jerome, King of Westphalia. The diadem on the brow of a humble Corsican adventurer, and placed there by the mighty soldier of fortune simply as one of his gifts, struck terror to the heart of every European Sovereign. England quaked, and courageously dwelt on plans of defence—on saving the State. Capt. Birch, of Royal Engineers, wrote an octavo volume, and Lord Selkirk another, and the matter is so much a matter of moment that the Edinburgh Review discusses the books and deals with the subject bulking so largely before the public mind. To Lord Selkirk as a coastman, looking out into Solway and the Dee from his seat near Kirkcubright, the question was one of every day. So insignificant a freebooter as Paul Jones had in the days of Selkirk's early childhood dashed in upon that coast and ravaged the family seat. Peasant ballads may still be heard commemorating that event.

Ye've all heard of Paul Jones,
Have ye not? Have ye not?
Ye've all heard of Paul Jones,
Have ye not?
Ye've all heard of Paul Jones,
He was a rogue and a vagabond.
He was a rogue and a vagabond,
Was he no?

He entered Lord Selkirk's hall,
Did he not? Did he not?
He entered Lord Selkirk's hall,
Did he not?
He entered Lord Selkirk's hall,
And stole the gold and jewels all
Did he no?

The plans suggested by Lord Selkirk were comprehensive and well considered. He would have a system of militia introduced whereby training would be given for three months to begin with to every able bodied young man between 18 and 19 years of age, and then three weeks in each succeeding year to be spent in camp till the soldier be 25. The critics of the time were able of course to point out weaknesses, but the success that has attended this system, as worked out by the Prussians in their overwhelming victories in the Austro-Prussian war of 1866, and the Franco-Prussian war since, is a favorable commentary on the plan proposed by Lord Selkirk in 1808. It was immediately after the publication of this work that the distinguished honor of Fellow of the

KIRK WAS KNOWN AS THE TERRITORY OF SELKIRK.



1. Hudson's Bay.
2. Lake Winnipeg (Ouenipique).
3. Lake Winnipegosis.
4. Lake Manitoba.
5. Saskatchewan River.
6. Fort Daer (now Pembina, U.S.).
7. Assiniboine River (or St. Charles).
8. Souris (or St. Pierre).
9. Missouri.
10. Mississippi.
11. Lake Superior.
12. York Factory.
13. Red River of the North (or Miskouesipi).

Dotted trapezium represents territory acquired by Lord Selkirk.

The transfer was made deliberately, and the highest legal authorities in Britain gave their opinion favorably as to its validity. Whether their opinion was correct or not is of no consequence for our present purpose. Every step taken by the projector of the scheme, which none can deny was of magnificent proportions, was becoming the action of a high-minded and honorable man—a man, moreover, of enthusiastic purpose and brilliant conception. For the present paper this must suffice. Many a further page must be written ere we can see his whole career. We have only reached May, 1811. But we have got the clue to the life of this really great man, and unless our judgment is astray, to the proper elucidation of the course of the Nor'-West Company. To do justice to the matter there should be given the details of the project, the character of the wild land to which the Selkirk colonists came, with an account of their hardships and varying fortunes. There should moreover be considered Lord Selkirk's defence of his people, his long and laborious journey when coming "coute qui coute," with his band of soldiers he saw the land of his colonists. The charges against him should not be disregarded, but it may be stated now that so far as I have been able to judge they are the product of self-interest and a most thoroughly one-sided combination in Canada of traders and public men—and even clergymen included—to damage a philanthropic and self-denying man and thwart the ends of public justice. The noble Earl disappears from the scene when after "suffering the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," beaten down by litigation, by persecution, and by calumny, he died at Pau in the Pyrenees in the year 1820.

A vote of thanks moved by Consul Taylor seconded by Mr. Whitcher, was given the writer, and the meeting closed.